

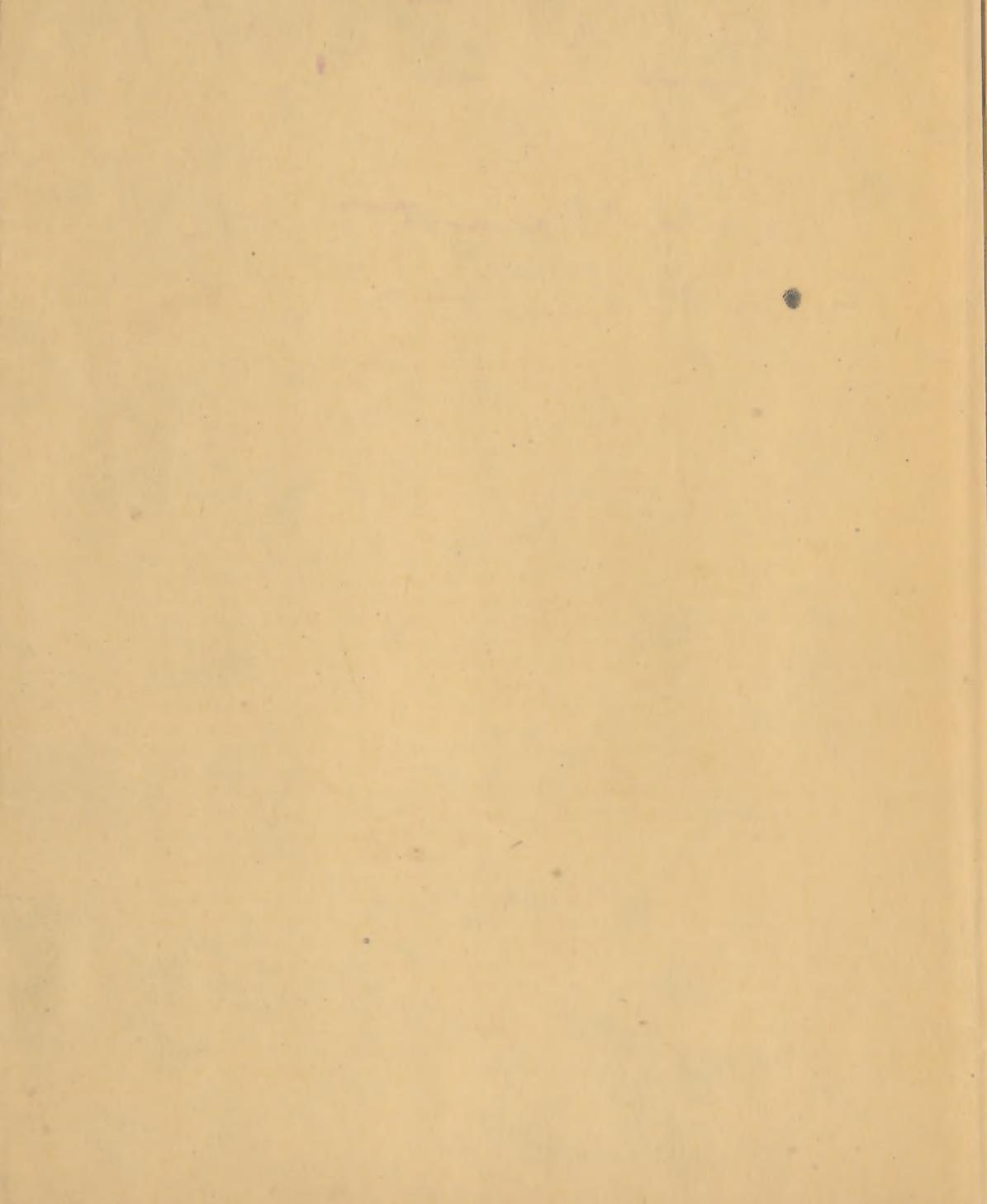
Culbertson, (H.)

In memoriam x x x x

The life and character of

C. C. Hildreth x x x





In Memoriam.

THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF C. C. HILDRETH, M.D., A.B., A.M.

A memorial sketch read before the Zanesville Medical Society, September 5, 1889,

BY

H. CULBERTSON, M.D., Zanesville, O.

Having been appointed by this Society to read an essay upon the life and character of our departed brother, I have the honor to present the following testimonial:

The life of Charles Cook Hildreth was extremely uniform, direct, and complete. His mission was simply to heal the sick.

He was born at Marietta, Ohio, April 28, 1811, and died August 11, 1889, at Zanesville, Ohio, the place of his life-work. His father, a native of Massachusetts, was Dr. Samuel Prescott Hildreth, and his mother Rhoda Cook Hildreth. Educated, in part, at Marietta, Ohio, his collegiate course was completed at Ohio University, Athens, Ohio. Graduating in 1828 or 1829, he was made an A.B. and A.M. by that college. In March, 1833, he graduated at the Medical College of Ohio as M.D., and soon settled at Zanesville, Ohio, and continued in the practice of his profession here until the day he was paralyzed, a period of fifty-six years. He was married to Miss Sarah A. Swearengen, March 23, 1836, who survives him but is in feeble health.

Dr. Hildreth enjoyed a large practice during all his professional career. Although a skillful physician, he was also a very able surgeon and obstetrician, and in all these domains his practice was extensive and success great. He was a member of the old Medical Society of Zanesville in 1835 or 1836; of the late Muskingum County Medical Society; of the late Zanesville Academy of Medicine; of the Zanesville Medical Society; of the Muskingum Valley Medical Society; of the Ohio State Medical Society; and of the American Medical Association. He contributed largely to the medical journals in this and other states. He did not belong to any societies other than medical. He invested his means mainly here, in real estate and corporate companies. His life was a most active one in the practice of his beloved profession, indefatigable in his efforts for the sick and dying, scarcely ever absent from his post, a Nestor of medical skill.

Dr. Hildreth was not a strong man physically, yet he possessed great tenacity of life, which endured for more than three score and ten years, and he went



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down in the harness. There is no doubt had he cast aside his work and taken his seasons of rest and pleasure he would have lived several years longer. But he loved his professional work, and this was his *pleasure*; and so he lived, working day after day and year after year, in sunshine or cloud, sick or well, for the good of his patients.

His death was unexpected. Although he had evidently been failing for the last three years (especially in the last six months), he clung to his duties. On Tuesday afternoon, August 6, last, just after performing an operation upon a diseased jaw, he became speechless and nearly fell into a chair; soon right hemiplegia developed, and motion and sensation became *nil* on this side. The left side of the body was normal. Tuesday night he became unconscious, and remained so until early Friday morning, when he recognized parties and signified answers by nodding his head. This continued until Friday evening, when his respiration became impaired for the first time during the progress of the case. The heart also began to fail about this time. Under remedies the heart became regular, but the respiration continued to fail from the return of hemorrhage upon the brain, and he died comatose on Sunday noon, August 11, 1889.

The hemorrhage of brain was both primary and secondary, and from the impairment of speech the left middle cerebral artery was probably ruptured and the speech center and other motor and sensory centers involved. His blood vessels were no doubt calcareous. The first day, in the evening, he had one involuntary stool, and also incontinence of urine, which latter persisted throughout the case. He had the use of his left extremities

throughout the case. He died with his desire gratified, on the fifth day of his sickness, for he did not wish to be long sick.

The *character* of Dr. Hildreth was as well-defined as his life. In him we witness the advantages of a thorough literary and medical education. He possessed a trained mind over which he had perfect control. A mind which enabled him to analyze the most abstruse medical problems and to accept that which was truth and reject error. Seldom do we find so acute a logician as he. His indications of cure were clean cut, and his application of remedies pointed and effectual. His powers of diagnosis were excellent. He never gave up the ship until life was extinct. He was an early and late attendant at the bedside in serious cases, and watched their progress with unusual closeness day and night. His life was truly one long self-sacrifice to the interests of his patients. He took no respite whatever from his labors, and never visited any distant place of recreation. He was ever in his office when not attending to his professional duties elsewhere. His office was his home, and here he greeted his friends and patients warmly and sincerely. But nowhere did he shine more brilliantly than at entertainments of his medical brethren at the meetings of medical societies at his home. He was very fond of the drama, and until within the last three years he attended all such entertainments as were worthy. This was his greatest amusement. He was a fluent and accurate speaker on medical topics, and many will remember the force of his practical teachings. I think therapeutics in medicine was his favorite subject. To him the art of medicine was nothing unless it cured, or aimed to cure, disease. In surgery he was bold, cautious, and de-

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cisive. As to the propriety of executing an operation, none were better judges than he. He had an art, I think peculiar to him, of doing a minor operation and gaining a successful issue of the case, when many would have done bolder surgery and sacrificed more tissue.

He was an obstetrician of large experience, great skill and success. I doubt if anyone exceeded him in art and practice in this branch. I have been surprised at the facility with which he applied forceps and performed obstetric manipulations. He, I believe, was the first to propose the knee-elbow position in intra-uterine versions. He advocated the use of anæsthetics, and the simultaneous employment of ergot in labor, and in this practice he was remarkably successful and skillful.

In surgical operations his delicate hand wielded the knife with grace, skill, precision, and rapidity, and in fifty-six years he did all of the major and minor operations, many of them repeatedly.

Notwithstanding his numerous professional duties and obligations, he found leisure to devote to literary pastime. It is not generally known, but it is true, that he was familiar with poets and poetry, and could repeat, impromptu, line after line of his favorite authors. I think he preferred the fascinating lines of Longfellow. It is true also that he wrote beautiful poetry himself, and his poetical lyrics were laden with sparkling wit. Yet he never published any of such productions.

Dr. Hildreth was the most reticent man I have ever known. He used to say, "Why speak ill of any one; this world is large enough for us all." The only way one could discover his feelings was by his acts. He detested unprofessional tricks to obtain practice. He lost all confidence in such parties and would have no personal

relations with them. If, however, he found parties violating the secrets or obligations of medical consultations, nothing would induce him to meet such persons in council. But not one word would he express against such physicians. He was a rigid interpreter and observer of the code of ethics and expected others to be the same. I never knew him to do a dishonorable act in his profession.

At the same time he was forgiving, for beneath his proud nature he possessed one of the kindest hearts. He was not demonstrative, but his acts spoke tenderness louder than words. He was a true friend and one that could always be depended upon. He abhorred a lie, and lost confidence in anyone detected in a falsehood. He held "an honest man is the noblest work of God." He was cautious and sympathized with those about him in his professional, social, and financial relations. He was quite liberal with his patients, but in a financial bargain he was as shrewd as any one, and his investments were profitable.

He was the most punctual man I have ever known. He met every engagement when due, and the consultation found him present to the minute.

For sixteen years I had the pleasure of being associated with him as an Examining Surgeon in the Pension Board at this place. Never was there a more just and conscientious examiner than he. I need scarcely say his ability was great in this capacity, and he always sympathized with soldiers. His motto was: Lay well the foundation, be secret in design, execute promptly, and persevere.

So then thus has passed away from this earth a truly great man and good physician. It becomes this Society to put on, not these exterior habiliments which be-

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speak sorrow for departed ones, but that enduring grief which lives and dwells in the heart.

I may sincerely and devotedly ask, and ourselves, we may say with Randolph:

“ Strive to live well: tread in the upright ways,
And rather count thy actions than thy days;
Then thou hast lived enough amongst us here,
For every day well spent I count a year.
Live well, and then, how soon soe'er thou die,
Thou art of age to claim eternity.”

